

John Murray

From: Marcia Rich
Sent: Thursday, January 08, 2004 5:55 PM
To: John Murray
Cc: Christine Joyce
Subject: Answer to other question for Selectmen

Here it is.

Questions

All dept heads - Manager's Message - p. 3: In order to put the \$23.4 million "Needs" budget into perspective, could you define the guidelines provided to staff in determining what "Needs" really means. For example, last year, you presented an estimate for the FY05 budget of \$22.1 million and now we are at \$23.4 million for FY05 - an increase of \$1.3 million. What explains the difference? Does this reflect any improvement in services, increases in demand, or inflation, or simply reflect the status quo, etc.?

Needs considered in formulating Acton Memorial Library's FY05 operating budget and capital request:

- 1) **Continuance of state aid certification.** The requirements with financial impact include minimum hours, support for the materials budget and an appropriation requirement that confirms stable municipal financial support over time and fair treatment of the library's budget relative to that of other municipal departments.
State aid certification means that other libraries will honor Acton libraries' requests to borrow materials, residents may borrow materials directly from other libraries, eligibility to compete for grants such as the \$20,000 Community Languages Grant which Memorial Library received in 2003 and approximately \$25,000 in state aid for Acton's libraries' use.
- 2) **Sufficient staff hours to maintain current hours of opening and levels of service.** This is important because Acton residents are unhappy that the library is open four less hours a week. Acton has a very high and rising circulation per FTE staff member, so service levels are already hard to maintain.
- 3) **Additional staff hours to restore service hours lost due to FY04 budget cuts.** Although the time chosen for closing (Thursdays 5-9) was the lowest traffic count of the week, it averaged over 50 people per hour. Thus the closing is problematical for many library users and also for community groups wishing to use library meeting rooms. (Capital Request; Not Recommended by Manager.)
- 4) **A materials budget that is at least 15% of the total budget.** Inflation in the publishing industry tends to exceed that of the economy as a whole. Consequently, prices are rising as circulation increases, formats multiply, and the town's population, its needs and its languages become more diverse. These factors mean additional funds are necessary in order to have a collection that meets community needs.
- 5) **Sufficient funds to cover the Minuteman Library Network (MLN) assessment and minor library accounts.** MLN fees have risen as state support for telecommunications has been slashed 90%.

John Murray

From: Marcia Rich
Sent: Thursday, January 08, 2004 2:52 PM
To: John Murray
Cc: Regina Tischler
Subject: one selectmen's question

Here is my answer to one of the questions--I'm still working on the needs one but have a meeting at 3:00.

Regina & Marcia - West Acton Library - Please explain why the books and periodicals request exceeds 15% of the total budget? (My computation shows it at 16%.) I have an e-mail from Marcia that states we are eligible to reduce our requirement to 13%. We need to be consistent.

During the present budget crisis, the Board of Library Commissioners has modified and added options to some certification standards. In 2000, they introduced a 'Request for Flexibility,' which I (Marcia) only became aware of in December. This allows libraries open the number of hours of a higher population range to allocate the same percentage of their budget to library materials do the libraries in the higher population range.

As Acton is in the 15,000-24,999 population range, the minimum hours of opening is 50 per week and the minimum percentage for materials is 15%. However, since Memorial is open 63 hours a week and that is the minimum for the 25,000-49,999 population range, Memorial may use the 13% figure for materials that libraries in that population range use.

The lower percentage was used because the AML Board of Trustees and Director had to cut \$25,000 from the FY05 budget. Possibilities for so large a cut were very limited due to the structure of the budget. Lowering the materials percentage to 13% and including the portion of the Minuteman Library Network fee used for databases as part of the materials budget (allowed by the Board of Library Commissioners) enabled 72% (\$18,000) of the cut to be generated from the materials budget. The rest came out of personnel and small accounts such as equipment repair, office supplies, dues and membership, professional development, etc.